

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1983

INFO AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 4999

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, TH

SUBJECT: THAI PRESS REPORTS ON ALLEGED COMMUNIST FORCE MASSING
ON THAI NORTHERN BORDER

1. ENGLISH LANGUAGE DAILY THE BANGKOK POST CARRIED
HEADLINE STORY ON MARCH 22 OF "3,000 MAN INSURGENCY FORCE"
MOVING OVER THAI/LAO BORDER ACROSS FROM CHIANG RAI PROVINCE.
FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN THE NATION OF MARCH 25 STATES THAT
PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT CLAIMS THAT THOUSANDS
OF LOCAL AND FOREIGN COMMUNIST INSURGENTS MASSING ALONG
THAI BORDER OPPOSITE THE MEKONG RIVER IN CHIANG RAI PROVINCE.
KHUKRIT, ON BASIS THIS INFORMATION, ACCORDING TO ARTICLE
DEEMS CONTINUANCE AND ENFORCEMENT OF MARTIAL LAW IN SOME
PROVINCESAND PARTICULARLY CHIANG RAI ESSENTIAL.

2. EMBASSY HAS CHECKED OUT THESE REPORTS WITH GENERAL SAIYUT
AND HIS ISOC STAFF AND FIND THAT PRESS STORIES
HIGHLY SENSATIONALIZED AND EXAGGERATED. SAIYUT
STATES THAT THAI OBSERVERS IN THE NORTH ARE WITNESSING
INCREASED TROOP ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE BORDER IN LAOS
BUT NO INDICATION OF MASS INFILTRATION ACROSS BORDER
INTO THAILAND. THERE IS CONTINUING, ACCORDING TO
SAIYUT, THE USUAL INFILTRATION OF MEN AND MATERIALS
INTO THAILAND FROM LAOS IN SUPPORT OF THE CT MOVEMENT
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BUT NO HARD EVIDENCE OF MAJOR UPSURGE AS REPORTED IN

THAI PRESS.

COMMENT: SAIYUT POINTED OUT THAT THAI OFFICIALS STATIONED IN PROVINCES ALONG THAI/LAOS AND THAI/CAMBODIA HAVE BEEN ALERTED TO WATCH FOR ANY UNUSUAL COMMUNIST TROOP MOVEMENTS AS RESULT OF SITUATION IN CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM. HE FEELS CURRENT REPORTS OF POTENTIAL COMMUNIST "INVASION" FORCES RESULTS/ FROM OVERZEALOUS AND "JUMPY" THAI REPORTING SOURCES WHO MAY HAVE FOCUSED ON TROOP ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE BORDER IN LAOS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS AND ARE MISREADING ACTIVITY ON LAO SIDE. SAIYUT ALSO CONVINCED THAT KHUKRIT TAKING POLITICAL ADVANTAGE OF INVASION-FORCE TALES TO CONTINUE IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW IN SENSITIVE PROVINCES, AN ISSUE THAT HAS BEEN UNDER DEBATE WITH SOME DEMAND FOR THE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW.
MASTERS

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